

# The Two Vanrevels

By BOOTH TARKINGTON,  
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(CONTINUED.)

Miss Betty had begun by making a pretense to eat only to please the old man, but the vain woman's cookery had not been unduly extolled, and Nelson laughed with pleasure to see the fluffy biscuits and the chicken wing not nibbled at, but actually eaten. He was an old house servant; therefore he had seen many young ladies go through unhappy hours, and he admired Miss Betty the more because she was the first who had indulged in strong weeping and did not snuffle at intervals afterward. He understood perfectly everything that had passed between father and daughter that morning.

When her breakfast was finished she turned slowly to the window, and, while her eyes did not refill, a slight twitching of the upper lids made him believe that she was going over the whole scene again in her mind, whereupon he began to move briskly about the room with a busy air, picking up her napkin, dusting a chair with his hand, exchanging the position of the andirons in the fireplace, and, apparently discovering that the portrait of Georges Mellicoe was out of line, he set it awry, then straight again, the while he hummed an old "spiritual" of which only the words "Chain de lion down" were allowed to be quite audible. They were repeated often, and at each repetition of them he seemed profoundly, though decorously, amused in a way which might have led to a conjecture that the refrain bore some distant reference to his master's eccentricity of temper. At first he chuckled softly, but at the final iteration of "Chain de lion down" burst into outright laughter.

"Honey, my Law," he exclaimed, "but yo' pa de 'celvin'dest man! He mighty proud er you!"

"Proud of me!" She turned to him in astonishment.

Nelson's laughter increased. "Hain't he jass de 'celvin'dest man? Yessuh, he de sot uppst man in dis town 'count what you done last night. What he say dis mawn, dat jass his way!"

"Ah, no!" said Miss Betty sadly.

"Yes'm! He proud er you, but he teabbul mad at dat man. He hain't mad at you, but he gotter cuss somebody. Jass reach out fo' de nighes' he kin lay han's on, an' dis mawn it happen soze it were you, honey. Uhuh! You oughter hear him las' night when he come home. Den it were me. Bless God, I ain't keerin'. He weren't mad at me, no mo'n he were at you. He jass mad."

Miss Betty looked at the old fellow keenly. He remained, however, apparently unconscious of her scrutiny and occupied himself with preparations for removing the tray.

"Nelson, what is the quarrel between my father and Mr. Vanrevel?"

He had lifted the tray, but set it down precipitately, bending upon her a surprised and sobered countenance.

"Missy," he said gravely, "dey big trouble 'twix dem two."

"I know," she returned quietly. "What is it?"

"Wha' fo' you ax me, missy?"

"Because you're the only one I can ask. I don't know any one here well enough except you."

Nelson's lips puckered solemnly. "Mist' Vanrevel vote Whig, but he ag'in Texas."

"Well, what if he is?"

"Yo' pa mighty strong fo' Texas."

"Is that all?"

"No'm, dat ain't hardly de beginnin'. Mist' Vanrevel he a abolitionist."

"Well? Won't you tell me?"

"Honey, folks roun' heah mos' on 'em like Mist' Vanrevel so well dey ain't hole it up ag'in him; but, missy, ef dey one thing topper God's worl' yo' pa do despittly and contestably despise, hate, cuss an' outrageously 'bominate wuss'n a yaller August spiduh it are a abolitionist. He want stomp 'em eye'y las' one under he boot heel 'cep'n dat one Mist' Cralley Gray."

Dey's a considabul sprinklin' er dem abolitionist 'bout de kentry, honey. Dey's no' dat don' know w'ch dey is, an' dey's mo' still dat don' keer. Soze dat why dey go git up a quo'l 'twix yo' pa an' dat man, an' 'range to have 'er on a platfawm de yeah 'fo' de las' campaign, an', sub, dey call de quo'l a debate, an' all de folks come in 'fum de kentry, an' all de folks in town come too. De whole possetucky on 'em sit an' listen."

"Fus' yo' pa talk. Den Mist' Vanrevel, bofe on 'em mighty cole an' civilized. Den yo' pa git wo'm up, missy, like he do, 'case he so useter have his own way. 'Tain't his fault, he jass can't help hollerin' an' cussin' if anybody 'pose him. But Mist' Vanrevel

he jass as suvive, but he stay cole, w'ch make yo' pa all de hotter. Ho



"Honey, but yo' pa de 'celvin'dest man!"

boiler mighty strong, missy, an' some de back ranks 'gun snickerin' at him. Uhuh! He fa'r jump, he did. An' den bimeby Mist' Vanrevel he say dat no man oughter be given de pilverize to sell another ner to wollop him wid a blacksnake, whether he 'buse dat pilverize er not. 'My honabul 'ponent,' s's he, 'Mist' Carewe, rep'sent in hisself de 'ristocratic slave ownin' class er de souf, do' he live in de nawf an' 'ploy free labor. Yit it sca'sely to be b'lieve dat any er you would willin'ly trus' him wid de powah er life an' death ovah yo' own chillun, w'ch is vircuously what de slave ownah p'sess.'

"Missy, you jass oughter see yo' pa den! He blue in de face an' dance de quadrille on de bon'ds. He leave his cha'h, git up an' run 'cross to de odder side de platfawm an' shake he fis' ovah dat man's head an' screech out how it all lies dat de slaves evah 'ceive sich treatments. 'Dat all lies, yo' pu'juh!' he holler. 'All lies, yo' misabul thief!' he holler. 'All lies, an' yo' know it, yo' low bawn slaudah' an' scoun'le!'"

"An' wid dat Mist' Vanrevel he jaff in yo' pa face an' tuhn to de crowd, he did, an' say, 'You reckon dat if dish yuh man a slave ownah an' a slave had anguhed him as I have anguhed him tonight, does any er you b'lieve dat dat slave wouldn' be tied up an' whipped tell de blood run an' den sole down de rivuh tomorrer?"

"Well, sub, 'co'se mos' on 'em b'lieve same as yo' pa, but dat sune'y fotch 'em, an' win de debate, 'case dey jass natchully lay back an' roah, dey did, missy. Dey laff an' stomp an' holler tell you could 'a' hearn 'em a mild away."

An', honey, yo' pa'd a millyun times druther Mist' Vanrevel a kil't him dan tuhn de laff on him. He'd shoot a man, honey, ef he jass s'picion him to grin out de cornder his eye at him, an' to stan' up dah wid de whole county fa'r roahin' at him—it's de God's mussy he did'n have no ahms wid him dat night. Ole Mist' Chen'eth done brung him home, an' yo' pa reach out an' kick me squah out'n' de liberry winder soon's he ketch sight er me."

The old man's gravity gave way to his enjoyment of the recollection, and he threw back his head to laugh. "He sho' did, honey! Uhuh! Ho, ho, ho! He sho' did, honey; he sho' did!"

Nevertheless, as he lifted the tray again and crossed the room to go, his solemnity returned. "Missy," he said earnestly, "ef dat young gelmun fall in love wid you, w'ch I knows he will ef he ketch sight er you, lemme say dis, an' please fo' to ba'h in mine—better have nuttin' do wid him 'tall fo' he own sake, an' 'bove all keep him fur 'way f'um dese p'emises. Don' let him come in a mild er dis house."

"Nelson, was that all the quarrel between them?"

"Blessed mussy, ain't dat 'nough? Ef dey's any mo' I ain' hearn what dat part were," he answered quickly, but with a dogged tightening of the lips which convinced Miss Betty that he knew very well.

"Nelson, what was the rest of it?"

"Please, missy, I got pack yo' pa trunk, an' it time long ago fer me to be at t'z wuk." He was half out of the door.

"What was the rest of it?" she repeated quietly.

"Now, honey," he returned, with a deprecatory shake of his head, "I got my own wuk 'tend to, an' I ain't nevah ax nobody what 'twas, an' I ain't goin' ax 'em. An' lemme jass beg you foller de ole man's advice. You do de same, 'case nobody ain't goin'

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tell you. All I know is dat he later and were some'n 'bout dat rarin Cralley Gray. Yo' pa he send channedge to Mist' Vanrevel, an' Mist' Vanrevel 'fuse to fight him 'case he say he don' b'lieve shootin' yo' pa good do yo' pa any good, an' he still hope mekkin' good citizen outter him. Dat brung de laff on yo' pa ag'in, an' he 'clare to God ef he ketch Vanrevel on any groun' er his'n he shoot him like a mad dog. 'Pon my livin' soul, he mean dem wuds, missy! Dey had hard 'nough time las' night keepin' him fun teahin' dat man to pieces at de fish. You mus' keep dat young gelmun 'way fum heah!"

"He came home with me last night, Nelson. I told father so."

"Yes'm. Yo' pa tole me you say dat, but he reckon you done it to mek him madder, 'case you mad too. He say he done see dat Cralley Gray comin' 'long de hedge wid you."

"He was mistaken. It was Mr. Vanrevel."

Nelson rolled his eyes fervently to heaven. "Den dat young man run pintedly on he death! Ef you want keep us all dis side er de Jawdan rivuh don' let him set foot in dis neighborhood when yo' pa come back! An', honey"—his voice sank to a penetrating whisper—"fo' I do a lick er wuk 'lego-in' out in de stable an' git down on my knees an' retu'n thanksgivin' to de good God 'case he hole Carewe street in de dabkness las' night!"

This was the speech he chose for his exit, but after closing the door behind him he opened it again and said cheerfully:

"Soon's I git de trunk fix f' yo' pa I bring 'roun' dat bay colt wid de side-saddle. Yo' better set 'bout gittin' on yo' ridin' habit, missy. De roads is mighty good dis sunshiny weddub."

"Nelson."

"Yes'm."

"Do you think such an attack as father had this morning—is—dangerous?"

He had hoped for another chance to laugh violently before he left her, and this completely fitted his desire. "Ho, ho, ho!" he shouted. "No'm; no, no, honey! He jass git so mad it mek him sick! You couldn't kill dat man wid a broadax, missy!"

And he went down the hall leaving the reverberations of his hilarity behind him. The purpose of his visit had been effected, for when Miss Betty appeared upon the horse block in her green habit and gauntlets she was smiling, so that only a woman—or a wise old man—could have guessed that she had wept bitterly that morning.

She cantered out to the flat, open country to the east, where she found soft dirt roads that were good for the bay colt's feet, and she reached a crossroad several miles from town before she was overcome by the conviction that she was a wicked and ungrateful girl. She could not place the exact spot of her guilt, but she knew it was there, somewhere, since she felt herself a guilty thing.

For the picture which Nelson had drawn rose before her—the one man standing alone in his rage on the platform, overwhelmed by his calm young adversary, beaten and made the butt of laughter for a thousand. Her father had been in the wrong in that quarrel, and somehow she was sure, too, he must have been wrong in the

"personal" one as well—the mysterious difficulty over Fanchon's Mr. Gray, who had looked so ashamed last night. What feud could they make over him, of all people in the world? He looked strong enough to take care of his own quarrels, even if he was so rigorously bound by Fanchon's apron string when it came to a word with another girl.

But the conclusion that her father had been in error did not lessen the pathetic appeal of the solitary figure facing the ridicule of the crowd. She felt that he always honestly believed himself in the right. She knew that he was vain; that he had an almost monstrous conception of his dignity, and realizing the bitterness of that public humiliation which he had undergone she understood the wrath, the unspeakable pain and sense of outrage which must have possessed him.

And now she was letting him go forth upon a journey, his way beset with the chances of illness and accident, whence he might never return. She was letting him go with no word of farewell from his daughter. In brief, she was a wicked girl. She turned the colt's head abruptly to the west and touched his flanks with her whip.

So it fell out that as the packet foamed its passage backward from Carewe's wharf into the current the owner of the boat, standing upon the hurricane deck, heard a cry from the shore and turned to behold his daughter dash down to the very end of the wharf on the well lathered colt. Miss Betty's hair was blown about her face, her cheeks were rosy, her eager eyes sparkling from more than the hard riding.

"Papa," she cried, "I'm sorry!"

She leaned forward out of the saddle, extending her arms to him appealingly in a charming gesture and, absolutely ignoring the idlers on the wharf and the passengers on the steamer, was singly intent upon the tall figure on the hurricane deck. "Papa, goodbye. Please forgive me!"

"By the Almighty, but that's a fine woman!" said the captain of the boat to a passenger from Rouen. "Is she his daughter?"

"Please forgive me!" the clear voice came again, with its quaver of entreaty, across the widening water, and then as Mr. Carewe made no sign by word or movement of hearing her and stood without the slightest alteration of his attitude she cried to him once more:

"Goodbye!"

The paddle wheels reversed, the boat swung down the river, Mr. Carewe still standing immovable on the hurricane deck, while to the gaze of those on the steamer the figure on the bay colt at the end of the wharf began to grow smaller and smaller. She was waving her handkerchief in farewell, and they could see the little white speck in the distance, dim and dimmer, yet fluttering still as they passed out of sight round the bend nearly three-quarters of a mile below.

## CHAPTER IX.

BETTY never forgot her first sight of the old friend of her family. Returning with a sad heart, she was walking the colt slowly through the carriage gates

when an extravagantly stout lady in green muslin, illustrated with huge red flowers, came out upon the porch and waved a fat arm to the girl. The visitor wore a dark green turban and a cashmere shawl, while the expanse of her skirts was nothing short of magnificent. Some cathedral dome seemed to have been misplaced and the lady dropped into it. Her outstretched hand terrified Betty. How was she to approach near enough to take it?

Mrs. Tanberry was about sixty, looked forty, and at first you might have guessed she weighed nearly 300, but the lightness of her smile and the actual buoyancy which she somehow imparted to her whole dominion lessened that by at least a hundredweight. She ballooned out to the horse block with a billowy rush somewhere between bounding and soaring, and Miss Betty slid down from the colt, who shied violently, to find herself enveloped, in spite of the dome, in a vast surfeit of green and red muslin.

"My charming girl!" exclaimed the lady vehemently in a voice of such husky richness, of such merriment and unctious delight, that it fell upon Miss Betty's ear with more of the quality of sheer gayety than any she had ever heard. "Beautiful child! What a beautiful child you are!"

She kissed the girl resoundingly on both cheeks, stepped back from her and laughed and clapped her fat hands, which were covered with flashing rings. "Oh, but you are a true blue beauty! You're a princess! I am Mrs. Tanberry, Jane Tanberry, young Janie Tanberry. I haven't seen you since you were a baby and your pretty mother was a girl like us!"

"You are so kind to come," said Betty hesitatingly. "I shall try to be very obedient."

"Obedient!" Mrs. Tanberry uttered the word with a shriek. "You'll be nothing of the kind. I am the light mindedest woman in the universe, and any one who obeyed me would be embroiled in everlasting trouble every second in the day. You'll find that I am the one that needs looking after, my charmer."

She tapped Miss Betty's cheek with her jeweled fingers as the two mounted the veranda steps. "It will be worry enough for you to obey yourself. A body sees that at the first blush. You have conscience in your forehead and rebellion in your chin. Ha, ha, ha!" Here Mrs. Tanberry sat upon and obliterated a large chair, Miss Carewe taking a stool at her knee.

"People of our age oughtn't to be bothered with obeying. There'll be time enough for that when we get old and can't enjoy anything. Ha, ha!"

(To be Continued)

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